



*"...when three moons rose from the lap of the forest, dragons, terrible and great, made war on this world of Krynn."
—The Canticle of the Dragon*

THE ECOLOGY OF THE

DRACONIAN

Charging through the acrid smoke of the battlefield, wings flapping, swords drawn, a company of draconian shock troopers terrifies even the most hardened knight. Nobody could have imagined such creatures before the War of the Lance. Since then, draconians have left an indelible impression, one colored by rumor, supposition, and fear.

HISTORY OF THE DRACONIAN

Legends say that in the ancient days of Krynn, Paladine, the noble ruler of the gods, and Takhisis, the Queen of Darkness, bent their divine wills upon the elements and created the first dragons from base metals. Dragons of tin, lead, nickel, zinc, and iron, these creatures were the blessed of the gods. Covetous Takhisis, however, wanted the dragons as her own and, whispering corruption into their ears, they became tarnished and wicked. Sorrowful, Paladine sought to create five more dragons, this time from precious metals, and set them in opposition to their now chromatic cousins. Thus the gods set the stage for the

world of Krynn, home of the DRAGONLANCE campaign setting, and the many wars that would play out upon it.

Takhisis repeatedly attempted to conquer Krynn, her cause championed by ogres, lizardfolk, evil humans, and goblins. Each time, knights, elves, and Paladine's dragons defeated her. Bitter at the failure of her armies, Takhisis plotted revenge after revenge, finally striking upon an answer. She needed a new race of warriors and servants, loyal to her alone, a living symbol of her hatred for the dragons of light.

She gave Harkiel, a sly and crafty female red dragon, the task of secretly flying to the Dragon Isles. There the good dragons had spent the last thousand years apart from the mortals of Krynn. From them Harkiel stole their precious eggs, leaving behind her Dark Queen's threat: stay out of the coming conflict or the eggs would be destroyed. Thus, the good dragons remained in exile, watching helplessly as the powers of evil began to work in secret, readying their armies for war.



Takhisis had no intention of keeping the eggs safe. Indeed, they offered the key to her revenge. She imparted upon Dracart, a wizard of the infamous black robes, and Wyrllish, one of her dark clerics, the instructions for a vile ritual. Together with Harkiel, these depraved individuals corrupted the good dragons' eggs with dark magic, blasphemous invocations, and dragon ichor, deep within the dungeons beneath the city of Sancton. When these eggs hatched, an entirely new race spilled forth from the defiled shells—draconians.

The forces of the Queen of Darkness made quick use of this new secret weapon. Growing rapidly, the draconians matured, trained, and formed a powerful appendage of the rising dragonarmies, swiftly convincing Ariakas, Takhisis's chief Highlord, of their effectiveness. As the War of the Lance unfolded, refugees spread word of monstrous dragon-men, but the world had not seen dragons in more than a thousand years and the general populace largely considered these reports the ravings of madmen—at least, until the abominations took to the fields of war en masse.

After months of battle, the beleaguered forces of good discovered the secret behind draconian creation,

KNOWLEDGE OF THE DRACONIAN

The following table shows the results of a bardic knowledge or Knowledge (arcana) check related to draconians. This table assumes that a game takes place after the defeat of Dracart, Wyrllish, and Harkiel. Prior to this event most of the information about draconian creation remains unknown.

Knowledge (arcana)

DC Result

10	Draconians are brutal dragon-men. They have wings and scales and walk on two legs. Less savage than orcs or goblins, they wear armor and use weapons like trained warriors.
15	There are different breeds of draconian, and they all die in different, dangerous fashions. Some turn to stone, some to acid, and some explode.
20	The five types of draconian are aurak, baaz, bozak, kapak, and sivak. Bozaks and auraks cast spells, while sivaks can change shape and take the form of people they kill. The presence of evil dragons boosts the confidence of draconians.
25	Each of the five breeds of draconian is linked to one of the five good dragons. Despite being creations of dark magic, not all draconians are unable to overcome their evil tendencies.
30	A vile corruption ritual creates the draconians and involves the eggs of good dragons. An evil wizard, a dark cleric, and an evil dragon are required to perform this ritual.

a revelation that proved a turning point in the war. Gilthanas, an elven prince of the Qualinesti, and D'Argent, a silver dragon who had defied her oath of non-intervention, infiltrated the tunnels underneath Sancton and learned the truth. The heroes defeated Dracart, Wyrllish, and Harkiel, and brought draconian

creation to a standstill. D'Argent and Gilthanas returned the uncorrupted dragon eggs to the Dragon Isles, freeing the dragons of light from their oath. The good dragons released their fury by striking back at evil dragons, avenging their murdered young and allowing the allied goodly races to resist the dragonarmies.



Defeated, scattered to the four corners of Ansalon, and deprived of many of their highest-ranking leaders, the dragonarmies continued to lash out for years after the War. The draconians, trained for nothing but battle and terror, remained a dangerous and capable enemy even in a time of peace. Eventually, though, factionalism and rivalry erupted among draconian units and breeds. Lacking the cohesion of the dragonarmies, the draconian race split apart into like-minded groups, each seeking its own fate.

Yet the real question arose: could a race of warlike, unstable, and cruel creatures ever hope to regain some of the noble potential of their draconic sires? Would they simply go violently

into history's night, a footnote of corruption doomed to extinction?

PHYSIOLOGY OF THE DRACONIAN

As scaly bipedal creatures with claws, snouts, and tails, draconians superficially resemble lizardfolk or troglodytes. In truth, they bear a closer relation to their draconic progenitors than to humans or reptiles. This becomes more obvious when examined internally, for a draconian is a dragon forced into humanoid form. Most possess wings like dragons, share the same ocular structure that gives dragons their exceptional eyesight and darkvision, and rely upon the same heightened auditory and olfactory senses. Draconians even possess many draconic glandular systems such as the *draconis fundamentum*, a gland attached

to the heart and central nervous system that regulates and charges the draconian's body with the elemental power inherited from its dragon "parent." As a result, draconians are immune to almost all pathogens and can survive for long periods with very little food or water.

The draconian creation process, however, sabotages this otherwise delicately balanced internal physiology. When a draconian meets its end through violent means, magical forces erupt within the draconian and cause the *draconis fundamentum* to essentially overload. Sages know this phenomenon as a draconian's death throes, which presents a particular danger for any opponent who slays a draconian enemy. The specific nature of these death throes, and other distinguishing

THE DRACONIAN CREATION RITUAL

By all accounts, Takhisis only entrusted the secret of creating draconians to Dracart, Wyrllish, and Harkiel. Historians report even earlier experiments, however, and almost all of them failures. The true ritual involves vile incantations and prayers to Takhisis, chanted in unison by a dark priest and an evil wizard, preparing the egg of a good dragon placed upon an altar consecrated to the Dark Queen. At the climax of the ritual, the saliva of an evil dragon provides the final essence of corruption, harkening back to Takhisis's defiling of the first five dragons. The number of draconians produced always depends on the type of dragon. Brass eggs produce as many as twenty baaz, while a gold egg yields only one or two auraks.

characteristics, vary from one breed to the next.

Although only one race, there exist five different breeds of draconian, one spawned from each type of metallic dragon.

Baaz: Baaz draconians are the shortest and most capable of passing as other humanoids—with a little help from cloaks and masks. Their scales are brass colored, acquiring a greenish-brown patina as the draconian ages. Baaz frequently display ramlike horns or thick curving plates around their skulls, reminiscent of the brass dragons they're spawned from. Their features are considerably less reptilian in appearance than other draconians, with blunt snouts and thin lips, but undisguised they are never mistaken for humans. When a baaz draconian dies, the *draconis fundamentum* causes widespread calcification, possibly related to the brass dragon's stasis-inducing breath weapon. The outward result is that the baaz becomes a stonelike statue that crumbles to dust minutes later.

Kapak: Slightly taller and sleeker than baaz draconians, kapaks have longer snouts and snaggle-toothed jaws. Their whiskers, a mane of thin, dark hair, and softly padded feet give them an almost catlike appearance, but the coppery-brown scales and wings indicate otherwise. Kapaks possess a set of two glands underneath their

tongues, which constantly produce venomous saliva. This, together with the acidic quality of the *draconis fundamentum*, betrays their copper dragon progenitor. When a kapak dies, this caustic fluid reduces the kapak's body to a hazardous pool of acid.

Bozak: Bozak draconians boast broader, more prominent wings and smoother scaled hides than baaz or kapaks. Their bronze scales grow darker as bozaks age, while their claws, teeth, and eyes grow lighter. Along with this coloring, a bozak's flesh and blood are charged with seemingly uncontrolled magical currents. This resonance allows a bozak to more easily align itself with the ambient magic of Krynn, granting it a natural affinity for sorcery. Unfortunately, it also means that when a bozak dies, the draconian's soft tissue, skin, organs, and scales rapidly shrivel as if unable to withstand the unfettered power, causing the bones to explode outward with considerable force.

Sivak: The broad-shouldered sivak draconians easily top 8 feet in height,

making them the tallest of the draconians. Their fully-functional wings, unlike those of the other breeds, permit them the ability to fly as well as glide. Underneath their silver scales sivaks are muscular and powerful, and the transformative magic of their silver dragon progenitors allows them to easily take the physical forms of opponents they slay—often to the horror of those who witness such transformations. Such illusions also take on a morbid cast when sivaks die, as they take on the appearances of whatever beings killed them. These deceptions, however, reveal themselves three days after sivaks die, as their bodies collapse into piles of ashes.

Aurak: Aurak draconians are uniquely wingless and comparatively weaker than the other breeds. As tall as a bozak, the slender, gold-scaled auraks possess many of the same cosmetic features of gold dragons: catfish-like frills and whiskers around the jaw, elongated fangs, and sweeping spiked horns and spines. Arcane magic comes naturally to auraks, even more than with bozaks, as their *draconis fundamentum* acts as a volatile furnace of sorcerous power. By tapping into this reservoir of magical energy, auraks



SAMPLE DRACONIAN WARBAND

The following represents a typical elite draconian warband attached to the Green Dragonarmy, operating out of the desert region of Khur. The Green Dragon Highlord, Salah-Khan, favors kapaks and bozaks, assigning skilled bozak leaders to units of kapak skirmishers and archers. Sakiel's company consists of two strike teams, two groups of archers, and a command retinue.

Sakiel's Company

A relatively small company numbering only thirty-three bozak and kapak draconians, Sakiel's Company excels in swift ambushes and hunting down small bands of enemies.

Command Retinue (EL 11): Sakiel's Company maintains a tightly focused core command of three bozaks, including Sakiel himself (LE bozak fighter 3/sorcerer 2, CR 9, uses a +1 *seeking longbow*). Sakiel's lieutenants Dengath and Torrek (both LE bozak fighter 2, CR 7) each lead a strike team. Sakiel, a deadly marksman in his own right, often commands the archers directly.

Strike Team (EL 13): Kapaks, equipped with scimitars and studded leather armor, make up each strike team. Both teams consist of ten kapak skirmishers (LE kapak rogue 1/fighter 1, CR 6). The EL of a strike team increases to 14 if Dengath or Torrek commands it.

Archers (EL 10): The archer units use shortbows of masterwork quality. Each squad of archers is made up of five kapak archers (LE kapak fighter 1, CR 5). The EL of a band of archers increases to 11 if Sakiel leads it.

Tactics: Sakiel's Company favors missions in rocky badlands, where they can make use of advantages like cover and height. Sakiel arranges his archer units in positions that allow them to cover the advance of the strike teams who then spread out in skirmish formation. One team then tightens up to lead the assault against the opposing forces, engaging once before dispersing. The second team repeats the attack and alternates with the first team while the bozaks cast spells to confuse and hamper the enemy.

direct rays of pure force, transform or alter their physical form, and even slip through extradimensional pockets. Auraks can also release a noxious cloud of gas that atrophies muscle mass and blinds those caught within it. When slain, an aurak combusts, overloading the energy reservoirs stored within its body and causing it to explode in a fiery blast.

PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIETY OF THE DRACONIAN

As a created race, draconians respond to the social behavior instilled in them as they mature. The Dark Queen's armies intended to use them as soldiers and strict disciplinary methods employed by their superiors ensured that the dragon-men served loyally and efficiently. Before reaching full-size, leaders assign each draconian to a

training group, where it remains until mature. A draconian first sees a member of another breed only when ready to go to war. Their wartime roles therefore dictate the structure of their society.

Ironically, their progenitor dragons bequeathed their strongest and most prevalent social traits to the draconians, albeit twisted by the corruption ritual and its lingering instability. This dark mirror of the souls and personalities of the good-aligned dragons color much of what the draconian experiences and, despite the rigorous social conditioning of their dragonarmy masters, each breed naturally manifests distinct stereotypes.

Baaz and Kapak: Cruelty and cunning are common traits in both of these breeds. Baaz tend to be clanish and subject to forming brute

ADVANCED DRACONIAN

While most draconians advance as fighters, auraks and bozaks often take levels of sorcerer, and kapaks are likely to take levels of rogue. This example baaz draconian is an elite soldier in Dragon Highlord Ariakas's Red Dragonarmy.

SHOCK TROOPER KURZ CR 6

Male baaz draconian fighter 4
NE Medium dragon

DRAGONLANCE Campaign Setting 217

Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Listen** +2, **Spot** +3

Languages Common

AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19

hp 53 (6 HD)

SR 12

Immune disease, paralysis, sleep

Fort +11, **Ref** +4, **Will** +5

Spd 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +1 *scimitar* +10 (1d6+4/18-20) and bite +4 (1d4+1)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +9

Abilities Str 16, Dex 8, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 12

SQ death throes, glide, inspired by dragons, low metabolism

Feats Die Hard, Endurance, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Run

Skills Bluff +3, Intimidate +3, Listen +2, Spot +3

Possessions +1 *scale mail*, +1 *light steel shield*, +1 *scimitar*, *cloak of resistance* +1

Death Throes (Su): Kurz's body turns to stone the moment he dies. If killed by a slashing or piecing weapon, the wielder must make a DC 16 Reflex save or have the weapon trapped. The statue crumbles to dust after 1d4 minutes, releasing trapped weapons. Items carried by Kurz or trapped within his body are not petrified.

Glide (Ex): Kurz can use his wings to negate falling damage. While gliding, he may travel horizontally up to four times the vertical distance descended.

Inspired by Dragon (Ex): Kurz receives a +1 bonus on attacks and saving throws when within sight of an evil dragon.

Low Metabolism (Ex): Kurz can survive on one-tenth the food and water it takes to sustain a human.

squads, a twist on the brass dragon's social tendencies, while kapaks more commonly embody malicious or devious behavior, a perversion of the copper dragon's trickster nature. Neither breed produces above-average leaders, so the dragonarmies typically assign command of a baaz or kapak unit to either a non-draconian or a draconian of a different breed. Attitude with regard to structure and rank provides the key difference between the two: the self-serving baaz find strength more impressive than titles, whereas kapaks like to follow orders and rely on the tactics of their assigned superiors.

Bozak: Bozaks make exceptional sergeants, lieutenants, and political officers. Their training includes a significant amount of spiritual education, and most bozaks learn from their educators that their innate spellcasting powers come from devotion to Takhisis. Combined with a love of psychological warfare inherited from

their bronze dragon parentage, bozaks exhibit a sense of earned authority over the lesser draconians. Many feel their gifts bring with them a tremendous responsibility and their role is one of faith as well as leadership.

Sivak: Like bozaks, these draconians make effective leaders and commanders. They are fewer in number than all but the aurak draconians, and this makes them a precious commodity in the eyes of the Dragon Highlords. Sivaks train intensively and undergo rigorous conditioning. When twisted into a sivak, a silver dragon's deep affection for mortals becomes an obsession with espionage and covert activity, sometimes leading them to assassinate and impersonate the enemy. Most sivaks know that their assignments demand restraint and prudent action, and act accordingly.

Auraks: The least common of the draconian breeds, auraks are also the most independent. Few in number, immature auraks grow up in small,

focused training groups of three or four individuals. Intelligent and insightful, an aurak quickly learns that it occupies the top rung of draconian society. Each develops a feeling of superiority and privilege, a twisted remnant of the gold dragon's nobility and sense of purpose. Auraks thus master strategy, manipulation, and politics, never happy unless they are controlling something or someone.

While many of the draconians who survived the War of the Lance struggled with both their innate natures and the cruelty ingrained within them, their place in Krynn remains in question. Dark powers seek to control draconian hearts and many of even the most forgiving races refuse to forget the atrocities committed by draconians during the War of the Lance. Thus, the future of the draconian race seems to be one doomed to hatred, strife, and the purpose they were created for—war. ☛

FULL FRONTAL NERDITY by Aaron Williams



<http://archive.gamespy.com/comics/nodwick/ffn/ffn.htm>

